

Roles of Health Impact Assessment and the Potash Mining Project, Thailand

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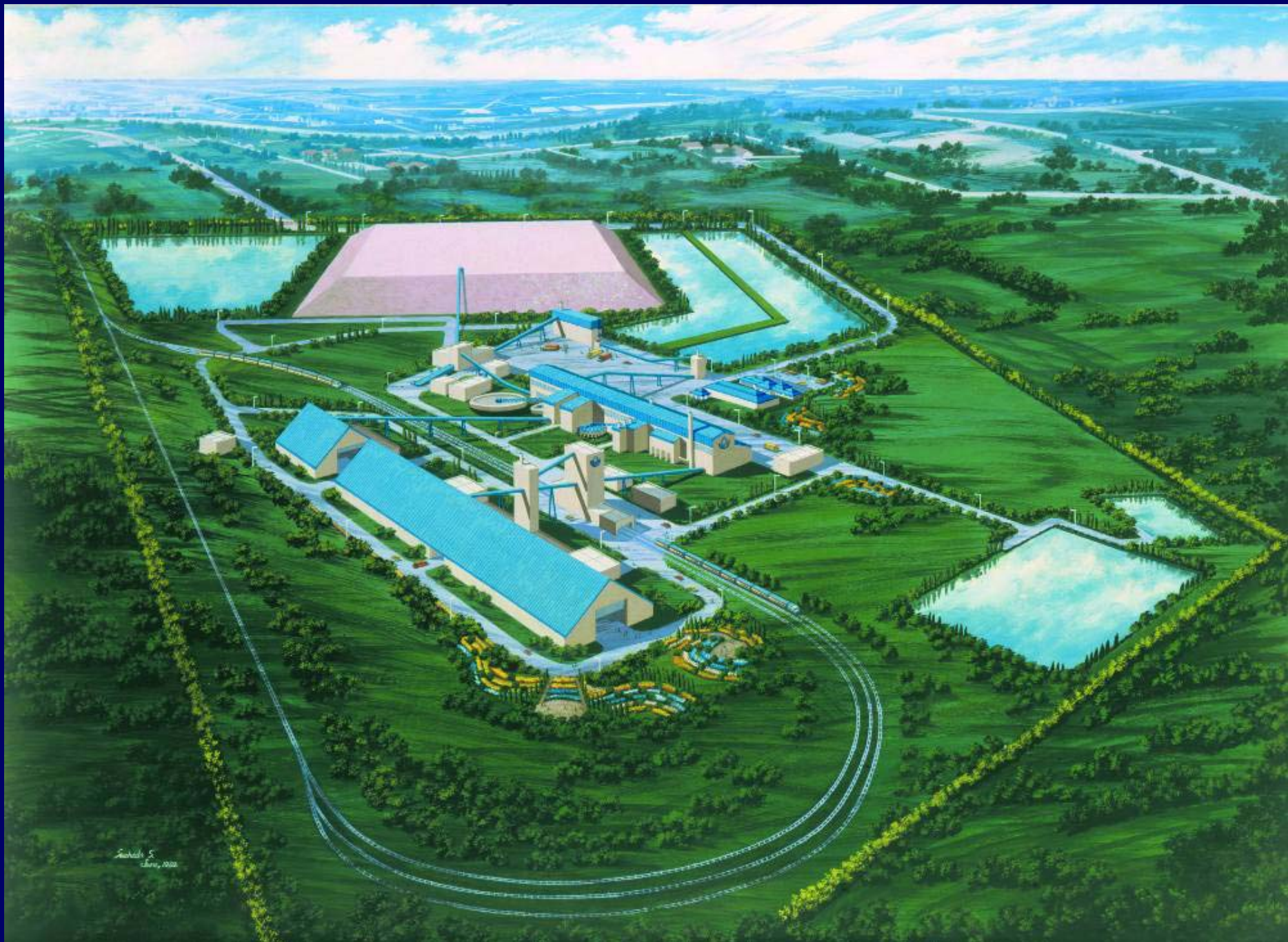
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Topics

- **The Udon Thani Potash Concession**
- **Local Opposition**
- **The Faulty EIA of the Project**
- **APPC fought back**
- **Changing Thailand's Minerals Act**
- **The Roles of Health Impact Assessment**
- **Lessons Learned and Future Development**

Strategic Location of Udon Thani Project





Architect S.
Chen, 2008

The Udon Thani Potash Concession

- *world-class potash resource*
- *high-grade, shallow depth*
- **one of the lowest-cost producers
industry**
- **2,500 hectares**
- **225 million tones of sylvanite**

The Udon Thani Potash Concession (cont.)

- *Asia Pacific Potash Corporation (APPC) --> concession for exploration*
- 90% of APPC owned by Asia Pacific Resources Ltd (APR)
- APR owned by Crew (Vancouver) and Bechtel (USA)

The Udon Thani Potash Concession (cont.)

- **2.0 millions tones of potash per year**
- **expected to have 25-30 year life production**
- **total 500 - 600 millions tones**
- **expected revenue -> US\$ 70,000 m.**

The Udon Thani Potash Concession (cont.)

- **APPC will mine a total area of 2,500 ha beneath residential areas, farmland, a national highway and railway and military installations.**

The Udon Thani Potash Concession (cont.)

- **The mine will locate 350 m. below the surface**
(~ one-third depth of the major potash mines in Canada)
- **5 millions potash wastes.**
- **22 years to carry back into underground.**

Current status

- the company has not received mining lease under the current Minerals Act of Thailand.

Local Opposition

- **Local communities fear widespread subsidence and salt contamination.**
- **In 1993, the first individual protests occurred during the APPC exploration survey.**
- **Currently over 1,000 people in 21 villages within concession area are protesters.**

Community Conflict (cont.)

- lack of public consultation about the basic project plans**
- In 2001 Udon Thani Environmental Conservation Group have been established.**
- The group has disseminated information about the project and its potential impacts by seminars and meetings.**

Community Conflict (cont.)

- **The salt waste is the primary concern.**
- **20 millions tones will be stored at the surface in a 40m high tailings pile that is to remain uncovered and exposed to wind and rainfall.**

Community Conflict (cont.)

- **Pitfalls in the EIA report and unfair agreement in the mining contract were the major arguments.**
- **The Minister set up a committee of environmental experts to re-evaluate the EIA report previously approved by the concerned authority.**

APPC fought back

- **Several local influential businessmen are being awarded construction contracts.**
- **The company returned gathering supports for the mine from other villages.**
- **People in the mining areas were separated into two opposite sides.**

Changing Thailand's Minerals Act

- **Thailand's Minerals Act did not provide conditions for the approval of underground mining.**
- **APPC first seek permission for the mine to be operated underground.**
- **Since 1997, Department Mineral Resources has at least five times submitted a Bill to the cabinet to amend the Minerals Resources Act.**

Changing Thailand's Minerals Act (cont.)

- **The amendment would provide APPC with favorable permitting conditions for its proposed mine.**
- **The Bill was rejected each time for its unconstitutional and unsatisfactory in terms of public participation and the protection of private property rights.**

Changing Thailand's Minerals Act (cont.)

- **The joint House-Senate committee has made significant amendments.**
 - **greater public participation**
 - **protection of property rights**
 - **funding for independent EIA, SIA, HIA etc.**
- **But allow the underground mining below > 50 m. underground !**

The Roles of HIA

- **HIA in Thailand is quite new, but it has been gaining more and more public interests.**
- **Since 2000, Reviews of international experiences and pilot HIA projected have been commissioned by the Health Systems Research Institute.**
- **Networks of HIA research groups were organized.**

The Roles of HIA (cont.)

- The HIA working group has joined the Udon Thani working group to organized a two-day public seminar on “Potash Mining Project and the Application of Health Impact Assessment Process in Thailand” on 17-18 May 2003, in Udon Thani.
- ~500 participants from various groups including the APPC company staff

The seminar issues & processes

- Recent project progress and stakeholders' concerned**
- Development, concepts, principles and procedures of HIA.**
- Proposed HIA model for the Udon Thani potash mining project by the HIA working group based on the framework of the 9 groups of health determinants developed by the Canadian Environmental Health (Kwiatkowski, 2002).**

The seminar processes (cont.)

- A video presentation of previous piloted HIA project
- Small-group brainstorming sessions to listen to voices of health concerns among participants.
- Press conference, announced the results of the seminar and urging the needs for a comprehensive HIA by independent agency.

Issues Raised

- **Serious concern has been expressed regarding the potential social and health impacts of the mining project.**
- **The lack of health risk assessment and no public safety nets in EIA statement.**
- **Neither health monitoring process nor risk elimination is planned.**

The Roles of HIA (cont.)

- The comprehensive HIA study commenced in July 2003 by stakeholders.**
- The HIA report will be submitted to the government as supplementary information for it to make decisions regarding the project's future.**
- It will be the first time the government will have a health impact study as a guideline for making a decision on a project.**

- **On 3 June 2003, the committee of experts in environment reconsidering the EIA report has concluded that the EIA report has a numbers of major mistakes and was not suitable for the permission process.**

Lessons Learned

- **Udon Thani potash mining project is an extremely large project, it faces increasing problems.**
- **HIA has been used to promote agreement and understanding as well as to disseminate information about the project to the public and the media.**

Lessons Learned

- **Involvement of all stakeholders are essential.**
- **Listening, encouraging open discussion and keeping everyone focused on the present situation – not only the negative impact but also the positive side – are some of the best ways to move everyone's mindset openly and honestly with each other.**

Future Development

- **International corporation to push the international legal standards of corporate code of conduct and extraterritorial operation.**

STOP! the
POTASH
PROJECT Now!

Development must lie in the hands of the PEOPLE!!